

Ruth 1 - Naomi's Family; Ruth Cleaves to Naomi; Ruth's Profession of Faith; Naomi's Weak Faith

I. Sojourn to Moab (Ruth 1:1-22)

- (1) Three deaths: Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion (1:1-5)
- (2) Naomi's inability to provide husbands for her daughters-in-law (1:6-14)
- (3) Ruth's resolve to be with Naomi (1:15-18)
- (4) Naomi's bitterness as she returns from Moab to Bethlehem (1:19-22)

Ruth 1

I. Sojourn to Moab (Ruth 1:1-22)

- (1) Three deaths: Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion (1:1-5)

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1 Now there came a time of famine while judges were ruling in the land of Israel. A man from Bethlehem of Judah, his wife, and his two sons left to live in the country of Moab.

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

- "...in the days when the judges governed" - a period of time after Joshua had conquered the land, but before they had a king; it was during a leadership vacuum from the time of Joshua's death to the present (Cf. Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)

— This was a time of scandal (i.e., Gideon, Samson); not a spiritually high time, and Ruth takes place during that era

— Without God and His guidance, Israel spiraled downward into 300 years of violence and moral failure

- "...famine" - one of 13 famines in the Bible; they usually advanced God's plans for His people, despite their tragic appearances (Cf. Gen 12:10; 26:1; 41-50; Ex 1-20)

- The reason why the family leaves the land; but also typically speak of a visitation of God's judgment; mentioned 4x in Lev 26:18-20; Deut 28:18,23,38-40,42 (curses)
- The famine was in response to the spiritual condition of the country and God's judgment for unfaithfulness
- Famines took place during the lifetimes of Abraham (Gen 12:10), David (2 Sam 21:1), Elijah (1 Kings 17:1), and Gideon (Judges 6:2-5)
- This chapter opens with a famine, but closes with a harvest. Similarly, the entire book opens with a bad situation, but ends with a good one. God was at work, behind the scenes and in spite of circumstances, blessing His people.
- "...Bethlehem in Judah" - vs. Bethlehem-Zebulun (Joshua 19:15)
- The family left Bethlehem ("house of bread") and Judah ("house of praise") to go eat out of a garbage can ("washpot" = garbage can, Ps 60:8; 108:9)
- Because of the Book of Ruth, the House of David is linked to Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- Ephrath was the ancient name for Bethlehem, and was also used as the name of the region where Bethlehem was located (Gen 35:19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; 1 Sam 17:12; Micah 5:2)
- "...reside" - "a resident alien"; the root meaning means to live among people who are not blood relatives, as a foreigner
- This indicates the purpose of the trip was not permanent residency
- The *ger* did not have native civil rights but was dependent upon the hospitality of the natives
- "...land of Moab" - Moab was a son of Lot

The Famine

- The story is best placed historically in the period of Gideon
 - Drought and famine were among the judgments God said would come upon the Land as a result of failure to keep the Law (Lev 26:18-20; Deut 28:23-24)
 - The Book of Judges provides ample evidence of their failure to keep the Law that brought about the famine in the days of Gideon
- Furthermore, the drought did not affect Moab, which is very close to Israel, separated only by the Dead Sea
 - So this was a local famine in Israel only, which points to this being a divine judgment
 - (1) This famine had to be a very serious one, one that extended over the whole Land; otherwise, they could have just simply sojourned in another part of Israel instead of leaving the country.
 - (2) The famine had to last for several years to compel them to leave the Land and go to Moab.
 - (3) Ten years would pass before Naomi would hear that the famine had ended.

(4) The Midianites oppressed Israel for seven years, and the oppression included the destruction of the produce of the soil from this famine that would naturally follow (Judges 6:3-4)

Background: Moab

- Moab was a son of Lot, the evil fruit of the incestuous relation of Lot with one of his daughters (Gen 19:36-37)
- Moabites had hired Balaam to curse Israel, during Israel's pilgrimage to Canaan (Num 22:1-8)
- Under normal circumstances Moabites were barred from participation in the national, corporate life of Israel (Deut 23:3-6)
 - Marriage to a Moabite was expressly forbidden
 - However, there were friendly relations between some individual Israelites and Moabites
 - When fleeing the wrath of Saul, David found a friend in the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:3-4)

2 The name of the man was **Elimelech**, and the name of his wife, **Naomi**; and the names of his two sons were **Mahlon** and Chilion, **Ephrathites** of Bethlehem in Judah. So they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

2 The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and their two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah. They journeyed to the country of Moab and lived there for some time.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Machlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

- "Elimelech" - "God is my king"; he was from Bethlehem ("house of bread")

— "God is my king" is an interesting name considering that during the time of the judges Israel had no king

- "...Naomi" - "pleasant" (Israel sometimes referred to in Scripture as "the pleasant land")

- "...Mahlon" - from the root *chalah*, "to be sick" "unhealthy, sickly"

— Mahlon married Ruth (4:10); Chilion married Orpah

- "...Chilion" - "wasting" or "pining"

— All these names appear in the Ugaritic Texts that were discovered, which shows them to be typical Semitic and Canaanite names

- "...Ephrathites" - the association with Ephrathah with Bethlehem recalls the first use of both names describing the same town, called "Ephrath" (Gen 35:16-19). This is where Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin.

Bethlehem

Two stories make up the appendix to the Book of Judges. The first of these is the story of Moses' grandson, Jonathan, who left *Bethlehem* to lead the Danites into idolatry (Judges 17-18). The second is the story of the concubine from *Bethlehem*, who became the focus of discord in Israel, that resulted in civil war, and almost the obliteration of the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19-21). The Book of Ruth also features *Bethlehem*. God may have given us all three of these stories as a set, a trilogy, because King David would also be from Bethlehem.

In the two stories in Judges just referred to, we can see that the Israelites would have looked down on Bethlehem after those incidents. However, Ruth reveals how God brought *great blessing* to Israel out of Bethlehem—in the person of *David*. This is in harmony with God's choice to bring blessing out of those things that people do not naturally highly value. Bethlehem in Ruth's day, therefore, did not have a good reputation. So it was not the environment in which David grew up that made him great, but his relationship with his God. That relationship, we learn from Ruth, was a heritage passed down to him from his ancestors, godly Boaz and Ruth.

3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

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3 Then Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she was left with her two sons.

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

- Elimelech's death may have been punishment for leaving the land rather than trusting in God (Cf. Lev 26:38), although the text does not say so specifically

4 And they took for themselves **Moabite women as wives**; the name of the one was **Orpah**, and the name of the other, **Ruth**. And they lived there about ten years.

4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

4 Each of her sons married Moabite women: one named Orpah and the other named Ruth. After they lived there about ten years,

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

"...Moabite women as wives" - Jews were forbidden to marry Gentile women, especially those from Ammon and Moab (Deut 7:1-11; 23:3-6; Neh 13:1-3; Ezra 9:1-4)

- In Moses' day it was the Moabite women who seduced the Jewish men into immorality and idolatry
- As a result, 24,000 people died (Num 25)
- Gentile marriage forbidden (Deut 7:2-3)
- Grace prevailed (Rom 8:3-4; John 6:37; Eph 2:11-13,19)
- "...Orpah" - "fawn"; "gazelle"
- "...Ruth" - "friendship"; "desirable"
- The Law forbid the reception of Moabites into the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation (Deut 23:3)

5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

5 both Mahlon and Chilion died, leaving Naomi alone with neither her husband nor her two sons.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

- Naomi's husband and two sons all died; she only had her two daughter-in-laws left (Ruth and Orpah)

- When Elimelech left Bethlehem 10 years earlier, he lost his property (he either sold it or lost it through indebtedness)

— So the family was disenfranchised from their land when they left Israel

— The context here is that the land was lost, and part of the story will deal with "redeeming the land"

(2) Naomi's inability to provide husbands for her daughters-in-law (1:6-14)

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the land of Moab, because she had heard in the land of Moab that **the LORD had visited His people** by giving them food.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food.

6 She and her daughters-in-law prepared to return from the country of Moab, because she had heard while living there how the LORD had come to the aid of his people, giving them relief.

6 Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

- "...the LORD had visited His people" - God eventually withdrew the famine from Judah, probably in response to His people's calling out to Him for deliverance (Cf. Judges 3:9,15; 4:3; 6:6; 10:10; 16:28)

— The famine lasted 7 years and they'd been in Moab 10 years

7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

7 So she left the place where she had been, along with her two daughters-in-law, and they traveled along the return road to the land of Judah.

7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

- So she, along with Ruth and Orpah, start to return home

- At this point, they are all three widows and they are destitute

8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, **return** each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD **deal kindly** with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

8 But along the way, Naomi told her two daughters-in-law, "Each of you go back home. Return to your mother's house. May the LORD show his gracious love to you, as you have shown me and our loved ones who have died.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

- Naomi appealed to her daughters-in-law to maintain their strongest earthly ties by returning to their mothers' families

- "...return" - a key word in Ruth (1:6,7,8,10,15,16,22 [2x]; 2:6; 4:3)

— Ruth is a story of return to the Promised Land, blessing, and primarily return to the Lord

— Naomi incorrectly believed that there was more hope for her daughters-in-law by staying in Moab rather than by going with her to God's chosen people and land

— Naomi should've told them what Moses said to his father-in-law (Num 10:29)

- "...deal kindly" - *hesed*, loyal love; Naomi prayed that God would pay back "loyal love" to Ruth and Orpah, since they had shown loyal love to their husbands and Naomi

— *hesed* refers to God's unbreakable covenant love

9 May the LORD grant that you may **find a place of rest**, each one in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they raised their voices and wept.

9 May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

9 May the LORD grant each of you security in your new husbands' households." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they cried loudly.

9 The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

- "...find a place of rest" - *menuhah*, to a young lady in that day, 'find rest' meant to have a husband who would provide for her

— Naomi is urging them both that they were young enough to return to their parents house and find another husband

— It refers to security (Cf. ISV), which in this case marriage would provide for both Ruth and Orpah, rather than freedom from work

— "Rest" was one of the great blessings God promised the Israelites as they anticipated entrance into the Promised Land (Ex 33:14; Deut 3:20; 12:9-10; 25:19; Joshua 1:13,15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1; Cf. Gen 49:15; Ex 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; Lev 16:31; 23:3,32; 25:4-5; Ps 95:11; Heb 3:11,18)

10 However, they said to her, "No, but we will return with you to your people."

10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."

10 They both replied to her, "No! We'll go back with you to your people."

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

- They both indicate that they are going to stick with their mother-in-law

— In Orpah's case, it was only a polite refusal; in Ruth's case, it was a genuine one

— Ruth and Orpah were willing to leave what they know and go to a Jewish land, which was completely foreign to them

11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

11 But Naomi responded, "Go back, my daughters. Why go with me? Are there still sons to be born to me as future husbands for you?"

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

- Naomi explains why she is insisting they both go back to their mothers: she was too old to remarry, bear sons, and wait another 20 or more years for those sons to grow up and marry them—their brothers' (Mahlon's and Chilion's) widows—and raise up seed.

— That seed would perpetuate the families begun by Mahlon and Chilion with Ruth and Orpah

12 Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I were even to have a husband tonight and also give birth to sons,

12 Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons,

12 So go on back, my daughters! Be on your way! I'm too old to remarry. If I were to say that I'm hoping for a husband tonight and then also bore sons this very night,

12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is much more bitter for me than for you, because **the hand of the LORD has come out against me.**"

13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

13 would you wait for them until they were grown? Would you refrain from marriage for them? No, my daughters! I'm more deeply grieved than you, because the LORD is working against me!"

13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

- "...the hand of the LORD has come out against me" - Naomi recognized that all that had happened to her was not pure chance, but the hand of God, possibly a judgment (Cf. Gen 30:1-2; 42:36)

— Naomi was bitter, not broken. Her situation in life was the result of the decisions she and her husband and sons had made, when they chose to leave the Promised Land

— Naomi trusted God to bless her grieving daughters-in-law (v8), yet wrongly thought of herself as beyond reach of God's blessing. Naomi's view of God was distorted because her perspective was to view God and her life by her lossess.

— Naomi's spiritual condition during her 10 years in Moab deteriorated. She knew the Lord was the true God and that Israel was her true home, but wholehearted devotion thrives best in through fellowship of believers and public worship (Ps 42:1-4; Heb 10:22-25)

— At this point, she did not realize that God would graciously bless her with a descendant through Boaz: he would father a son, who would carry on the name and lines of Ruth's

dead husband and Naomi's dead husband, who would eventually come King David and the Messiah.

Levirite Marriage

Levirate marriage was the practice of a single brother marrying his deceased brother's widow, in order to father children who would carry on the dead brother's name and extend his branch of the family tree. It was common throughout the ancient Near East and in Israel (Cf. Gen 38:8-10; Deut 25:5-10). The word *levir* comes from the Latin translation of the Hebrew term for brother-in-law.

14 And they raised their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth **clung** to her.

14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth **clung** to her.

14 They began to cry loudly again. So Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth remained with her.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth **clave** unto her.

- Orpah goes back, off the pages of Scripture, into oblivion

- "...clung" - *dabaq*, means "to stick like glue"; it indicates a deep commitment of unbreakable covenant loyalty

— The word refers to an ideal closeness that can only be experienced in a marriage relationship (Cf. Gen 2:24)

— Ruth decided to stick with her mother-in-law as closely as a husband would cleave to his wife (Cf. James 1:27)

— Ruth reversed the decision of her ancestor (Lot), and chose to identify with the promises of God that centered on the Promised Land. At that time, people believed that a deity had power only in the geographic region of its worshippers, so leaving one's land was to separate from one's god.

— The very same cause that induced Orpah to return home is what caused Ruth to stay

— The fact that Naomi will no longer have a husband or sons meant that she needed someone to take care of her

— Ruth understood that Naomi was older and couldn't do much for herself; she was destitute and without land or someone to take care of her

Ruth and Orpah demonstrate the two kinds of members in the church—the professors and the possessors. Orpah made only a profession of faith and failed at the climactic moment; Ruth possessed genuine faith, which produced fruit and works.

(3) Ruth's resolve to be with Naomi (1:15-18)

15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and **her gods**; return after your sister-in-law."

15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

15 Naomi told Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and to her gods. Follow your sister-in-law!"

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

- Ruth decided her prospects for loyal love and rest (v8-9) were better if she identified with Israel than continued to identify with Moab

— She came to admire Israel's God, in spite of Naomi's present lack of faith

— Ironically, Ruth, the Moabitess, exercised faith, while Naomi, the Israelitess, lived by sight; Ruth trusted God and obeyed the Mosaic Covenant, Naomi did not

- "...her gods" - their national god called Chemosh (Num 21:29; 1 Kings 11:7,33) who accepted human sacrifices (2 Kings 3:26-27)

— This was noted in the inscription of King Mesha on the Moabite Stone

The Moabite Stone

The Moabite Stone is a black basalt memorial stone discovered in Moab by a German missionary in 1868. Nearly four feet high, it contained about 34 lines in an alphabet similar to Hebrew.

The stone was probably erected about 850 BC by the Moabite King Mesha. King Mesha's story written on the stone celebrated his overthrow of the nation of Israel. Although the Biblical account makes it clear that Israel was victorious in the battle (2 Kings 3:4-27).

The passage shows that Mesha honors his god Chemosh in terms similar to the OT reverence for the Lord. The inhabitants of entire cities were apparently slaughtered to appease this deity, recalling the similar practices of the Israelites, especially as described in the Book of Joshua.

The Moabite stone has profound Biblical relevance: Historically, it confirms OT accounts. It is also valuable geographically because it mentions no less than 15 sites listed in the OT.

The writing on the stone also resembles Hebrew, the language in which most of the OT was originally written. Some pieces of the stone are now at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

16 But Ruth said, "Do not plead with me to leave you *or* to turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you sleep, I will sleep. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

16 But Ruth answered, "Stop urging me to abandon you and to turn back from following you. Because wherever you go, I'll go. Wherever you live, I'll live. Your people will be my people, and your God, my God.

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

- Ruth was raised in Moab, an idol-worshipping Gentile country

— She was abandoning everything not because she was married to a husband, but to follow her mother-in-law, including adopting a strange way of life

17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the **LORD** do so to me, and worse, if *anything but* death separates me from you."

17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me."

17 Where you die, I'll die and be buried. May the LORD do this to me—and more—if anything except death comes between you and me."

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

- The location of a person's burial was significant at that time (Gen 23; 25:9-10; 50:1-14,24-25; Joshua 24:32). It identified the area they considered their true home.

— When Ruth stated she wanted to be buried where Naomi would die and be buried, she was voicing her strong commitment to the people, land and God of Naomi (Cf. Luke 14:33)

— Naomi's life likely influenced Ruth to trust in Naomi's God

- "...LORD" - *Yehovah*, Ruth invoked the name of God in her oath, not the name of Chemosh

— Since people appeal to their own deity to enforce an oath, she clearly implies that Yahweh, not Chemosh, is now her God

— It is the same name God used to reveal Himself to the patriarchs in Genesis (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25; Cf. Ex 6:3)

— You get the impression that Ruth learned a lot during her time with Naomi

Ruth's profession of faith even outdid that of Abraham. She acted with no promise in hand, with no divine blessing pronounced, without spouse, possessions, or supporting retinue. She gave up marriage to a man to devote herself to an old woman, in a world dominated by men.

God had always welcomed non-Israelites into the covenant community of Abraham's believing descendants. Even in Abraham's day, his non-Hebrew *servants* who believed underwent circumcision as a sign of their participation in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17). At Sinai, God explained again that the Israelites, as priests, were to bring other people to God (Ex 19:5-6). Ruth now confessed her commitment to Yahweh, Israel, and Naomi—a commitment based on her faith in Yahweh.

18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her *about it*.

18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

18 When Naomi observed Ruth's determination to travel with her, she ended the conversation.

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

- Naomi dropped the topic of conversation

(4) Naomi's bitterness as she returns from Moab to Bethlehem (1:19-22)

19 So they both went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"

19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"

19 So they continued on until they reached Bethlehem.

Now when the two of them arrived in Bethlehem, the entire town got excited at the news of their arrival and they asked one another, "Can this be Naomi?"

19 So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

- Naomi experienced both blessings and hardships since she had left Bethlehem. When she returned home, she chose to emphasize her hardships.

- This was a journey of about 75 miles, and not on a straight or level path

- It meant they would have to descend from the Moabite highlands to the Jordan Valley, a descent of 4,500 feet, followed by an ascent to Bethlehem of 3,750 feet, walking through desert territory, through the Wilderness of Judah

20 But she said to them, "Do not call me **Naomi**; call me **Mara**, for **the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me**."

20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."

20 But Naomi replied, "Don't call me 'Naomi'! Call me 'Mara'! That's because the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me."

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

- "...Naomi" - means "pleasant"

- "...Mara" - means "bitter" (Ex 15:22-27)

— Naomi no longer regarded herself as "pleasant," but "bitter," as a result of what happened to her

— In Israel, names were descriptions of inner character, which in turn were presumed to influence the person's conduct (Cf. Jacob as "schemer," Gen 27:36; Nabal as "fool," 1 Sam 25:25; Jesus as "Savior," Matt 1:21)

— Similarly, to receive a new name meant a change in character and destiny (Cf. Abram to Abraham, Gen 17:5-8; Jacob to Israel, Gen 32:29; Simon to Peter, Matt 16:17-18; Saul to Paul, Acts 13:9)

- "...the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me" - Naomi had forgotten God's faithfulness and promises to bless all of Israel (Gen 12:1-3,7), and her tribe in particular (Gen 49:8-12), as well as all the godly in Israel (Deut 5:7-10)

— If someone expects the worst, they may not be expecting God to be faithful to His promises to bless. Negative thinking does not honor God; it betrays a lack of faith.

— But God had emptied Naomi so He could bless her and fill her

— "Almighty" - she used the name *Shaddai*, a name for God used 48x in the OT (31x in the Book of Job)

— The name also refers to God as "the Provider"

21 I went *away* full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

21 I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

21 I left here full, but the LORD brought me back empty. So why call me 'Naomi'? After all, the LORD is against me, and the Almighty has broken me."

21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

- Unfortunately, Naomi failed to see that Yahweh had not brought her back empty. She appears to have completely forgotten Ruth, who pledged herself to care for Naomi as long as she lived, had returned with her.

— Ruth was, and would continue to be, a tremendous blessing from the Lord

— Naomi considered Ruth as insignificant, but the women of Bethlehem later corrected her faulty view of Ruth's worth (4:15)

22 So Naomi returned, and with her **Ruth the Moabitess**, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of **barleyharvest**.

22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

22 So Naomi returned to Bethlehem from the country of Moab, along with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite woman. And they arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

- "...Ruth the Moabitess" - Ruth is frequently referred to in this way (here; 2:2,6,21; 4:5,10)

— This is one way attention was drawn to the fact that God used even a non-Israelite, from an enemy nation, to bring blessing to Israel

— The key to Ruth being this blessing was her faith in Yahweh and her commitment to His people (v15-18)

— Throughout human history, this has always been the key to God using people as His channels of blessing. It is not their origins or backgrounds, but their faith in and commitment to Yahweh and others, that make them usable

- Any good rabbi will tell you that when you see a seemingly irrelevant detail, stop and dig into it and you'll find a treasure

- "...barley harvest" - barley ripened before wheat, and began to be reaped sometimes as early as March, but generally in April

— The barley harvest is the first hint of something joyful on the near horizon

- In Ruth 3, we see the wheat harvest

There are three common mistakes Christians make, which are highlighted in this chapter: trying to run from our problems (v1-5), trying to hide our mistakes (v6-18), and blaming God for our trials (v19-22).